



## New Jersey Department of Children and Families Policy Manual

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TO: Manual Holders

ORIGINAL DHS ISSUE: March 1, 2002

**SUBJECT: Staff Attendance at Conferences or Other Events Sponsored by Department of Children and Families' Provider Agencies**

The purpose of this informational memorandum is to inform Provider Agencies and Departmental Components of Department of Children and Families guidelines regarding Department staff attendance at Provider Agency sponsored events.

### **DEFINITIONS**

In addition to defined terms included in the Glossary of the Manual, the following terms, when capitalized, shall have meanings as stated:

Approval means written permission from the Departmental Component's Ethics Liaison Officer to attend and/or participate in an Event; to accept an honorarium or fee; and/or to accept Direct or Indirect Benefits in connection with attendance.

Department Head means the administrative or executive head of the State Official's agency or his or her designee. The Commissioner of Children and Families has designated Departmental Component Ethics Liaison Officers to grant the approval defined above.

Direct Benefit means acceptance by a State Official from the sponsor of an Event or any other person of travel, meals, accommodation, waiver of conference or Event fee or any other costs associated with attending the Event for which no payment is made by the State but is not intended to mean nominal refreshments

such as nonalcoholic beverages and snacks (bagels, doughnuts, pastries and cookies).

Event means a meeting, conference, seminar, speaking engagement, symposium, training course, ground-breaking, ribbon cutting, meal, open house, cocktail party, fundraiser, holiday party, social function, or similar event that takes place away from the State Official's work location, is sponsored or co-sponsored by a non-government source and the invitation for which is extended to the State Official because of his/her official position.

Indirect Benefit means acceptance by a State Official from the Event sponsor or any other person of reimbursement for costs of travel, meals, accommodation, event fees, or any other costs associated with attending the Event for which no reimbursement is made by the State but is not intended to mean nominal refreshments such as nonalcoholic beverages and snacks (bagels, doughnuts, pastries and cookies).

Interested Party means 1. Any person, or employee, representative or agent thereof, who is or may reasonably be anticipated to be subject to the regulatory, licensing or supervisory authority of the State Official's agency; 2. Any supplier, or employee, representative or agent thereof; 3. Any organization that advocates or represents the position of its members to the State Official's agency; and/or, 4. Any organization a majority of whose members are as described in paragraphs 1 through 3 above

Person means any individual, association, organization, firm, partnership or corporation.

State Official means any State Officer or employee or special State Officer or employee as defined in the Conflicts of Interest Law, N.J.S.A. 52:13D-13(b) and (e).

## GUIDELINES

Pursuant to N.J.A.C. 19:61-6, Department of Children and Families staff may not accept free slots to an Event unless there is a specific stipulation in the Contract stating that a Departmental Component is entitled to an identified number of complimentary seats. If a Contract does not require a Provider Agency to provide complimentary seats for staff to attend an Event, the acceptance of such an offer would constitute the acceptance of a prohibited "Direct or Indirect" Benefit. N.J.A.C. 19:61-6.4 prohibits State employees from accepting a "Direct or Indirect Benefit" from a Contract Provider Agency, an individual representing that Contract Provider Agency, or any other Interested Party.

Departmental Components and Provider Agencies may negotiate complimentary arrangements through Contract and discretionary grant awards (in writing) to meet specific Departmental Component goals and objectives. When appropriate, subsequent Contracts or grant award notifications should stipulate (in writing)

that the Contract or grant funding is conditioned upon the allocation of a given number of complimentary slots to the Department.

If complimentary arrangements are not incorporated into the Contract or grant award, the Department of Children and Families Staff may attend the Event if the staff person or division pays the registration fee.

Employees may not accept discounted rates that are offered exclusively to their State entity. Departmental Components may accept discounted rates only when the discount is offered equally to all State entities.

Department staff must secure prior approval from their Department Head (i.e. supervisor, manager, Director, Assistant Commissioner, Chief of Staff, Commissioner or designee) to attend any such Event. The prior written approval of the Departmental Component's Ethics Liaison Officer to attend an Event shall be requested by completing the attached Request for Approval for Attendance at Event form. (Attachment 1)

If a State Official is making a speech, participating in a panel discussion at the Event or is an accompanying resource person for the speaker and/or panel participant, the State Official and resource person may accept a Direct or Indirect Benefit (such as a meal) if this Benefit is identical to the Benefits provided to other speakers or panel participants. This applies to Events designed to provide training, dissemination of information, or the exchange of ideas. Approvals granted by the Ethics Liaison Officer under this exception will be forwarded to the Executive Commission on Ethical Standards for review.

Departmental Component Contract administrators should contact their Departmental Component Ethics Liaison Officer if they have any questions concerning this matter.

The attached form can be found at the following website:  
<http://dhsportal.dhs.state.nj.us/NR/rdonlyres/B7500B1E-9639-4459-8D14-5457C4D9F409/225/AttendanceatEventsQuestionnaire.doc>